PRIVATE SUITE

VAPORWAVE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CAPITALISM AND CONSUMERISM

NYC'S MOST AESTHETIC LOCALES

ARTWORK BY C0MPUTORZ AND TONY SKEOR

AND MORE

COMMUNITY MADE VAPORWAVE MAGAZINE

PRIVATE SUITE

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

There are two types of people in this world: those who remember the past and those who forget it. With new technological advancements, fashion trends, and music genres being created at a blistering pace, the past has become an amalgam of what we want it to be. The past is doomed to be forgotten. It exists only as a reminder of the fact that we didn't spring from the void of nothingness. Stories are told of the past, but only a select few care to listen. Those who listened, who cherished the past, birthed a new music genre into the world. Utilizing the forgotten sounds and styles to create Vaporwave, a genre was born from a past that never truly existed but is loved by those who seem to vaguely remember it anyway. Private Suite is a magazine focusing on the musical tones, visual styles, and influences therein, that make Vaporwave what it is. Our goal is to grow the vaporwave community larger and closer together; to bring together those struck with dissonance by the fast-moving ever-changing modern world, those who long for the pink hues of the Digital Plaza. The past may be dead, but it is not forgotten. Vaporwave is a resurrection of that past, viewed through a lens not of nostalgia but one of sadness and longing. An era that lives on only in our minds, one we preserve through cassette tapes and digital jaypeg frames to remind us of better times. The past is dead and gone, but its corpse is preserved in rich Carrara marble. It looks so cold and distant, but so beautiful and aesthetic.

Vaporwave is vaporwave, long live death.

m a t t t スベト

If Private Suite reaches 400 readers, we will start releasing paper copies!

QUALITY AND FUTURE OF THE MAGAZINE

This magazine came about from a spur-of-the-moment post on /r/vaporwave, and the response from the community there was amazing! Many were excited to see where it would go, and many jumped onto the Discord server, ready to get their hands into the thick of it. Although there were a few prior examples of vaporwave magazines before us, I'm not sure if we had ever seen one with a founding background quite like this one. It made us, first and foremost, a community-made vaporwave magazine.

Enthusiasts pooled in with a myriad of backgrounds and skills, yet the thing that united all of us—how the lines of our lives converged to this one intersection in the world—was a passion for vaporwave. We were motivated to make the community something more established, more credible, and more enriched. We were all listeners at one point, but it wasn't enough for us to just hear and to feel: we had to create in the ways in the best way we knew how. For those of us that don't produce music or art, this was how we would contribute to this community we love. We were all small pieces of a mosaic that came together to create this magazine, and this community.

But this is not to say that it was the smoothest process. The magazine was created out of a burst of passion with no prior thought. It was only an idea, and within the course of 24 hours, it took its roots. It was very much a scramble, and this threw a wrench into everything. As hours extended into days, then into weeks, things started to slow down, we now had to deal with problems like whether people were still interested in writing for the magazine, trying to get enough content for the magazine, finding more people for understaffed roles, finding the visual language we wanted to use, organizing our workloads, and maintaining a social media presence. In other words, we made up the process as we went along.

I had joined a few other projects from other subreddits that were founded in a similar manner. I was worried it was going to be a flop, just like the other times. When things slowed down, and we started to talk to each other less, those seemed to be the death knells of this idea. I had seen this happen before, and a seed of doubt started to develop within me. It's not easy to propose, organize, and execute an idea entirely through the internet. These sorts of things always seem to have the odds stacked against it: no physical communication, only virtual, making it harder to create accountability; an idea gaining sudden momentum meant starting up disorganized, with no prior infrastructure or organization or documentation or timelines that would have expedited the process; the volunteer nature of the project meant that people could leave the project just as easily as they joined; the volunteer nature also meant that people wouldn't be able to work on it full-time, delaying things; proposing the idea on Reddit meant that once the idea left the front page, potential staff would come in at a slower and slower rate, which would eventually lead to being understaffed overall; and proposing it on Reddit and suddenly gaining momentum only to lose it as the post left the front page and as people became less inspired led to lower morale among the staff. Those of you wanting to start things up like we did, let this be a word of warning. We seemed about destined to fail, honestly—it was a miracle that we didn't. Despite my doubts, we made it through. Perhaps that speaks to our love of vaporwave.

I'm not satisfied with this issue. I don't think it was the best that it could've been. I don't think we brought everything that we could have to the table, and the quality of this issue has suffered for it. Even when we delayed our release by a month, it wasn't enough. We have let you down. So if you come into the issue expecting more from us, and came out of it disappointed, I understand. And I apologize for not doing more to prevent this, and instead becoming part of the problem, despite recognizing its facets due to my prior experiences. I sincerely, truly want this magazine to grow into something of an icon in the community, perhaps even the publication of record of vaporwave. I wanted more from us so that we could have more for you—but we certainly did not hit the ground running.

I hope that you all don't let this first issue be reflective of the quality of our future issues. We worked to push this issue out as soon as possible so we could start restructuring and reorganizing everything immediately. We're extremely ecstatic to get to work on the next issue with this restart, working on a blank slate. We have so many ideas in store, and we have so many plans and hopes for where we'll go. We took our baby steps and stumbled over, but hopefully we can get up, dust ourselves off, and march forward with confidence, learning from our mistakes. We won't be a mess the next time around.

Because of this reorganization period, there might be another delay until the next issue. But we certainly hope to be a monthly periodical after that! You all can definitely help ensure our success by deciding to jump onto the boat. We'd love to have you! The more help we get, the merrier. You can join us here: https://discord.gg/c6t4t8W. Even just discussing things with the staff and giving us ideas are big morale boosters, even if you don't plan on being staff yourself. And be sure to share the magazine with anybody you think might be interested! A larger reader base will ensure our longevity by giving us an audience. Following us on Twitter and Instagram for the latest updates would also help us!

We are a community-made vaporwave magazine, so we cannot survive without the community. If you want us to keep going, your support and your patience is all we need right now.

We promise that your stay at the Private Suite will be better, and we hope that you choose to stay with us again.

Regards from the Virtual Dream Plaza,

Zecon365
Lead Columnist

Vaporwave's Complicated Relationship with Capitalism and Consumerism by JetPuffed

Popular videos that discuss what vaporwave is and how it originated, such as "Vaporwave: A Brief History" by wosX (1.1 million views as of 04/17/18), have made the claim that vaporwave's beginnings focused on the themes of anti-capitalism and anti-consumerism. With explanations like this getting so much exposure, it's no surprise that the genre continues to bear this reputation despite the fact that much of vaporwave is apolitical, jocular, or meme-centric. There are three main components I want to examine in this article: authorial intent, the medium itself, and the conclusions of the listener.

A 2012 piece on DummyMag.com quotes Robin Burnett (INTERNET CLUB) as saying he wanted to do something "... about how this capitalistic society has generated a dehumanizing hyperreality [sic] by focusing on infinite generation of ideals as shown through commodities." The DummyMag article also states that Burnett is a staunch anti-capitalist. This is an important piece of vaporwave history and likely where much of the association between the sociopolitical issues, such as capitalism or consumerism, and the music comes from. Burnett's quote is indicative of his explicit intent. Since INTERNET CLUB releases like Redefining the Workplace helped lay the groundwork for the genre, the weight of his statements presses down on vaporwave that much more.

Much more recently in January 2018, NET DEATH (also known as VAPERROR) released an album entitled An Open and Free Internet. The album's artwork and song titles tie the release closely to the 2017 United States Federal Communications Commission decision to retract Net Neutrality. It's a strange, sad aural journey through what the artist must imagine the Internet's future to be. There's a good argument to be made that the lack of Net Neutrality could open the door for corporations to open the door for corporations to create ways to make consumers pay more for various services. This is, of course, assuming the FCC's decision will have this effect. As of May 16, the United States Senate voted to retain neutrality, so the dispute still lingers. At any rate, NET DEATH is reaching through the computer ports of the world to bring eyes to this issue.

The music, the aesthetic, and how these things are created play a role in the relationship between the genre and capitalism/consumerism as well.

The influence of our consumption-driven societies can be seen all throughout the genre. It's in the names of labels like Business Casual; artists like waterfront dining; albums such as Late Night Shopping in Tokyo by Apparent Tranquility; and songs like "Bear Market" by Frank Ducks. It's in the album art that accompanies the music as with Mall MoodsTM | Random | Disk 1® by Home VisionsTM. It's in the very bones of the music when the creations of businesses (commercials, music, etc.) are repurposed and/or sampled for creations of vaporwave.

Take a look at a few examples from different points in vaporwave's history. Saint Pepsi's music has been popularized through videos for such songs as "Cherry Pepsi" or "Private Caller." These videos enhance the songs quite nicely and have become hugely popular (4.7 million and 6.2 million views respectively). The influence these videos and songs have had, which incorporate montages of old commercials, is felt to this day.

식료품groceries, the artist responsible for 2014's 슈퍼마켓Yes! We're Open, has existed in vaporwave's middle life, putting out releases themed around various shopping ideas. Other creations using this theme include HOUSEWARES and s o f t drinks . While not to the level of impact as Saint Pepsi, this artistdemonstrates vaporwave's strange obsession with all things economic.

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3

Recently there have been releases like Success through Market Leadership by the aforementioned Frank Ducks, or With You (Shortly) by 위스키Ltd which have continued this theme of business and money. With You (Shortly) is an interesting release due to its themes of large-scale business phone systems, being on hold, making phone payments, etc. It's probably safe to say there will be more releases which incorporate these themes in the future.

The music, often being built using heavy sampling of old commercials, pop or jazz music, and everyday noises, is itself an example of the relationship between the music and capitalism/consumerism (although many plunderphonic genres could be discussed in this way). Specifically with vaporwave it's interesting to note that some releases, Floral Shoppe for instance, have large swaths of material that have undergone little to no sample editing. If you speed certain parts up, they sound like the source material. Releases like this actually cost money on sites like Bandcamp, showing a disregard on the part of the artist for copyright and attribution, while simultaneously embracing the capitalistic systems which generated the original material. This isn't an attempt to say anything about rights or laws, but rather an illustration of how the music seems to both love and hate the old world of business in the Internet age.

Given the fact that vaporwave artists have found themselves in rough legal waters with big record labels in the past, it struck me as funny when I found a September 2017 post on r/vaporwave from u/pinkboxteleport, presumably the Reddit account of the Pinkbox Teleport label runner Dolores Casabian, giving a statement regarding accusations of music theft involving James Ferraro, the creator of Far Side Virtual. We've reached a kind of metalevel at which vaporwave artists are allegedly ripping off other vaporwave artists. This irony is further demonstrative of the complicated relationship being explored. Do artists respect copyright and attribution or not? Are artists pro or anti-capitalism/consumerism? Do they only care when it affects them?

Since the vast majority of vaporwave – and art in general – is released to the world without explicit indications by the artist regarding intent, it's usually up to the listener to try and interpret the meaning.

Often this results in applying one's own conclusions or meaning onto the art without involving the creators. Discussions on various Internet forums dedicated to vaporwave make it clear that a chunk of the listening community is under the impression that vaporwave does indeed try to say things about capitalism and consumerism. This can be seen by going to r/vaporwave's search feature and inputting "capitalism" or "consumerism." Some of these conclusions are no doubt colored by the aforementioned video summaries, but listeners are coming to conclusions about vaporwave's relationship with these issues. When creators put work out, control is lost over whatever ideas spurred the creation and the listener takes the reins. This is not to fault anyone for any ideas applied to the music they listen to but to point out the gap between artistic genesis and consumptive conclusion.

A final idea to touch on is how artists, listeners, and the medium are intertwined through the sale of music and merchandise. Artists make music and charge listeners money. This is pure capitalism and consumerism. If vaporwave can be said to engage in commentary about these concepts, and the commentary is negatively criticizing these ideas, then the genre has arrived at a conflict of interest. This is particularly egregious when considering the rising popularity of vaporwave releases on physical media like cassettes or vinyl records - tangible markers of profit-driven consumption.

Ultimately, whether vaporwave is pro or anti-capitalism/consumerism, or whether it seeks to mock these concepts, or whether it says nothing and simply makes use of associated imagery is moot. Vaporwave as a genre has had and continues to have a strange relationship with these concepts. At times this link is spelled out and other times it is incidental. Artists release their productions to the community, the music and visuals flow through our virtual landscapes with varying degrees of impact, and the minds of the listeners formulate responses. Because of vaporwave's history, aesthetic, and sample-based sourcing, the sociopolitical reputation is not likely to go away in the future. No matter what happens down the road or what politics may be injected or filtered out, there's sure to be a lot more music to continue enjoying.

テロリスト

Vapor

c0mputorz via Steam Workshop

Vaporwave is a unique twenty-first century internet music phenomenon, featuring heavily conceptual and experimental albums and heavy use of visual tropes, pseudonyms, and irony. Despite its contemporary nature, vaporwave is an interesting subject for Kierkegaardian analysis. Søren Kierkegaard was a prolific 19th century Danish philosopher; the father of existentialism. Although Kierkegaardian philosophy and the vaporwave art movement are separated by 150 years and the boundaries of modern technology, Kierkegaardian thought explains many aspects of vaporwave. This article argues that although vaporwave primarily falls into Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage, it also has aspects that surpass the aesthetical and reach for deeper meaning, often in a uniquely Kierkegaardian way. This article will explain what vaporwave is, analyze it using Kierkegaard's rhetoric both directly and through secondary interpretations, and finally highlight important aspects of vaporwave that cohere and/or clash with Kierkegaardian philosophy.

Vaporwave is hard to define: it is not just a musical genre, but also an accompanying visual and textual aesthetic. Vaporwave music is usually slow and repetitive, sampling slowed down, chopped up 1980s funk, pop, and commercial background music (Glitsos 100). Well-established tropes include palm trees, Roman busts, early digital graphics, Japanese culture, tropical landscapes, cityscapes, and corporate environments. Often, several of these tropes clash incoherently on album artworks. Artists use pseudonyms which feature CJK characters and unicode symbols, such as with 骨架的, t e l e p a t h テレパシー能力者, and 식료품groceries. These features pose vaporwave as not just a style of music, but as a perplexing audio-visual experience. After its inception in late 2010, vaporwave boomed in popularity in the second half of 2012, and continues to grow through today (Galil).

At first glance, vaporwave fits neatly into Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage. The aesthetic stage, as described in Either/Or, is an "ironic portrayal of German romanticism." An aesthete, in order to make life interesting, creates and immerses themself in sensuous experiences.

To make vaporwave, artists transform forgotten songs into something modern. The foreign letters in album and track titles are unintelligible to the audience, but are intricate and mysterious, making them more interesting than plain text. Vaporwave tropes on album artwork further add to the mystery, leaving the audience to question their meaning. However, the combination of parts makes vaporwave seem fragmented. Combined, the themes seem complex, but only because they create a confused work which likely lacks deeper meaning. Kierkegaard criticized the aesthetic sphere because although the aesthete's experience may appear meaningful and interesting, it is actually meaningless without synthesis with a higher ethical or religious purpose. However, this is just the surface. Scholars have searched for meaning behind vaporwave, and their findings provide a foundation for deeper analysis of the genre.

Academic analyses of vaporwave fall into two main categories: vaporwave as a satire of capitalism, and vaporwave as "memory play." The former explanation was popularized soon after vaporwave's inception by Adam Harper's 2012 Dummy article "Vaporwave and the pop-art of the virtual plaza," and poses vaporwave as a pseudo-Marxist critique on capitalism (Harper). The latter interpretation, as explained in Laura Glitsos's 2017 article "Vaporwave, or music optimised for abandoned malls," instead views vaporwave as a "memory play" meant to create false nostalgia, and pertains mainly to "hypnagogic" vaporwave, a popular subgenre. These analyses provide a basis for further analysis.

The most popular analysis of vaporwave frames it as a satirical criticism of capitalism. According to Leor Galil, the popular artist Internet Club coined the term vaporwave because the music "reminds me of fogged-out environments – places where everything is obfuscated and uncertain," (Harper; Galil).

Vaporwave

by lucidarchive

In his article, Harper links the genre's name to the word "vaporware," a derogatory term for fantastical heavily-advertised products that never make it to market, and also ties it to the famous phrase "all that is solid melts into air" from Karl Marx's The Communist Manifesto. Harper explains vaporwave as a satirical and accelerationist take on capitalism and consumerism, based on the redistribution, arguably stealing, of music and the usage of commercial imagery of malls and plazas. If posed as a criticism of capitalism, the meaning behind vaporwave arguably falls into Kierkegaard's ethical sphere. However, this "ethicism" is different from Kierkegaard's original formulation. Kierkegaard's ethicism primarily involves living purposefully, seriously, and decisively, in a way that follows the rules of society (McDonald). If vaporwave is criticizing capitalism, it is arguably fighting against society. More importantly to Kierkegaard, it is criticizing capitalism in a way that is not serious or decisive. The anonymity of the internet allows vaporwave artists to express ideas without fully committing to them or having to defend them. This criticism applies to most of the internet, as Hubert Dreyfus explains in On The Internet. Vaporwave as a critique of capitalism does not fall neatly into the aesthetic and/or ethical sphere. However, Harper's analysis of vaporwave does not present a complete picture of the genre.

Though Harper's analysis matches the views of some vaporwave artists, others rejected his interpretation and lamented the publicity. Harper's article brought vaporwave into a mainstream spotlight, but also alienated many artists. Artists whose work did not align with the Marxist interpretation and artists who did not want to be limited by the narrow definitions of sample-based vaporwave distanced themselves from the "vaporwave" label (Galil). In Two Ages, Kierkegaard describes a process which he termed levelling.

Dreyfus describes levelling as a process in which a society loses appreciation of individuals and "levels" all qualitative distinctions (Dreyfus). The root causes of levelling are the public and the press. Kierkegaard saw that the press not only changed public opinion, but allowed it to exist at all. Because of the press, Kierkegaard criticized his age for being "characterized by disinterested reflection and curiosity that level all differences of status and value" (Dreyfus 72). The press creates a society in which "not a single one of those who belong to the public has an essential engagement in anything" (Kierkegaard, Two Ages VIII 86). This is a "levelled" society: although people may hold diverse options, they hold them shallowly, each with little conviction. As the public learned about vaporwave through Harper's article and other publicity, levelling occurred. Newcomers, influenced by publications, saw vaporwave as an Marxists tongue-in-cheek genre of music. Existing artists resented the label "vaporwave" because it confined their music to a very narrow and disingenuous style and meaning. By late 2012, new artists were producing hundreds of unremarkable albums with shallow capitalist themes, and followers of the scene declared the genre dead (Galil).

However, in 2014 a style of vaporwave which emphasizes telling a narrative over displaying capitalist themes rose to prominence. Championed by an artist named HKE (originally Hong Kong Express), the new sound was a calmer, "hypnagogic" style of vaporwave. In "Vaporwave, or Music Optimised for Abandoned Malls," Laura Glitsos examines this style. Highlighting its often nostalgic feel, Glitsos frames vaporwave as "memory play." This explanation of vaporwave has gained popularity as artists distanced themselves from Marxism and moved towards hypnagogic styles.

Glitsos frames vaporwave as a type of music that aims to create "ersatz nostalgia" in the listener: nostalgia for a time the listener may not have experienced, or a time that may have never existed at all (Glitsos 104, 106). In this way, vaporwave combines the past, present, and future into a "fractured memory" (Glitsos 110). This explanation of vaporwave casts it into the aesthetic sphere as well, though for different reasons. In Kierkegaard's The Seducer's Diary, the reflective aesthete Johannes whose goal is not to seduce, but to instead manipulate others to create the possibility of seduction. Kierkegaard criticises the reflective aesthete because the valorization of possibility makes the aesthete lost, without the concrete to guide them (McDonald). Additionally, the lack of the concrete creates a lack of continuity in the aesthete's experience. As the aesthete quickly gains and loses interested in a subject, the experience of that subject becomes fragmented. In The Seducer's Diary, Johannes lives a fractured experience. Despite its form as a collection of letters and diary entries, "with only a single exception it abandons dates altogether, as if the story in its development became so qualitatively significant that, although historically actual, it came so close to being idea that specifications of time became unimportant" (Kierkegaard, The Seducer's Diary 13-14). This connects well with vaporwave as ersatz nostalgia. Vaporwave envisions ideas of the past and future, but in its fantasy makes both unimportant—disconnected from the truth. The subject of the vaporwave piece is fragmented across different visual aesthetic tropes and foreign glyphs. To Kierkegaard, this will ultimately lead to meaninglessness (McDonald). However, not all aspects of vaporwave falls into existential meaningless.

Two aspects of vaporwave are especially relevant to Kierkegaard: irony and pseudonyms. Using irony and the recontextualization of vaporwave tropes, several artists deconstruct the meaning of "music." As with any movement, the motivations of individual artists vary, but many popular artists have pointed to these themes when explaining their work. The irony of vaporwave is romantic irony. Romantic irony arises when an artist creates a work to be self-aware of itself (Poole). The clashing elements in vaporwave are similar in composition to Ludwig Tieck's absurdist romantic poetry, of which Kierkegaard discussed in his doctoral thesis The Concept of Irony. Kierkegaard describes Tieck's work as such that while reading "the reader suddenly sees a strange face which yet looks so

familiar that it seems as though he had once seen this face far back in time—in a past transcending the historical consciousness" (Kierkegaard, The Concept of Irony 322). This matches the ersatz nostalgia in vaporwave, and both vaporwave and Tieck's works use clashing, absurd elements. Kierkegaard criticizes Tieck's work, saying "the reader can have no truly poetic relation to this genre of poetry, since the poet himself has no authentically poetic relation to his poem…. The whole design fails to order itself into a poetic totality" (Kierkegaard, The Concept of Irony 320). This criticism applies to most vaporwave, but some artists worked to bring a complete, coherent experience to the genre. HKE, who also founded the Dream Catalogue label, describes his work as "recontextualizing music from the past to display it in a new light... Even the act of destruction is creation in its own right" (F, Marcel). HKE describes his work in vaporwave as trying to "destroy," and in the process create something new. This can be anything as concrete as a sound in a song or an object whose image is used in album art. Kierkegaard admired a similar use of irony by Socrates, who used ironic questions to force his interlocutors to abandon their immediate responses, forcing them to gain subjectivity in their thoughts. HKE says he is "trying to relate it all back to [his] ideas and discover some kind of underlying truth to the nature of existence and the human condition" (F, Marcel). HKE and many others use irony in vaporwave to give new meaning to music.

In vaporwave, the usage of pseudonyms not only provides anonymity as is standard on the internet, but can also serve the same purpose as Kierkegaard's pseudonyms. As with his use of irony and satire, Kierkegaard used different pseudonyms, each with their own personalities and life views, to present his works as a conversation and prevent ethos from affecting the reader's view. Without a famous name backing a work, a reader cannot take their word as authority and must think for themselves. With the experimental nature of vaporwave, pseudonyms allow artists to create narratives and personalities around new albums by preventing past works from influencing listener's experience. A perfect example of this is the "unlistenable" album Floral Shoppe 2 by The Darkest Future. The album was an illegitimate sequel to vaporwave's most famous album, Floral Shoppe by Macintosh Plus (HKE). After releasing the album on Dream Catalogue to severe backlash, the album's true author, DARKPYRAMID, released a blog post detailing his experiment and correspondence with HKE. DARKPYRAMID had listened to the noted album

◨世界から解放され◨ ("liberated from the world" in Japanese) by Internet Club, but found it to be "absolute crap, unlistenable" (HKE). DARKPYRAMID created Floral Shoppe 2 as a satirical criticism of New Deluxe Life, and with the cooperation of HKE, released the album on Dream Catalogue as Floral Shoppe 2. He chose this title "because it was going to...have more of an effect than it would if I had released it under the original name and cover. It's like I said – the whole concept of aesthetic presentation having such a strong effect on the music" (HKE). Several months later, HKE quietly revealed that he had create both Floral Shoppe 2 album as well as the DARKPYRAMID personality. HKE did not explain his motivation, but the fabrication created an interesting experiment within an experiment, leading listeners to question both their initial knee-jerk reaction to Floral Shoppe 2 and their acceptance of the secondary explanation presented through DARKPYRAMID. The use of pseudonyms in both vaporwave and Kierkegaard's work is meant to deceive, but in a constructive way. As Kierkegaard explains in On My Work as an Author, "One can deceive a person out of what is true, and—to recall old Socrates—one can deceive a person into what is true" (Kierkegaard, 467 On My Work as an Author, The Essential Kierkegaard). HKE's experiment deceived listeners into thinking critically about how they formed their opinions on the album and on music in general, and according to HKE, the results were "highly predictable" (HKE). However, there was an unintended side effect. Using the DARKPYRAMID alias, HKE wrote, "The weirdest thing about this whole experiment is how I have actually grown to enjoy ◨世界から解放され◨ over the past week after listening to it well over ten times in full, finding new things to enjoy about it with every listen" (HKE). Despite the harsh non-musical sounds of ◨世界から解放され◨, listeners can still enjoy the album, leading the listener to question what really makes music listenable. DARKPYRAMID concluded, "What is innovative now is vaporwave. Because of its presentation, the music becomes more than just a song and instead something larger than that." The pseudonyms in vaporwave allow the work to become more than a song, and become a complete narrative. This can be used in a Kierkegaardian way to deceive listeners to a more subjective, or just used to tell a story in album form. Either way, the pseudonyms in vaporwave allow the work to take on meaning of their own.

Vaporwave is a unique twenty-first century phenomenon. Despite that, Kierkegaard's philosophy provides exceptional analysis of vaporwave, its history, and its interpretation. In many ways, vaporwave falls into Kierkegaard's aesthetic sphere. It aims to make the boring interesting, but can be incoherent and shallow in meaning. The most common interpretation of vaporwave, as a satirical critique on capitalism, casts vaporwave mainly into aesthetic sphere, but with some ethical underpinnings. The effects of the Marxist interpretation validates Kierkegaard's insights into the effects of the "press" and the "public sphere." Glitsos's explanation of vaporwave also falls into the aesthetic sphere, but in a different way. The genre creates a mandatory "ersatz nostalgia" similar to what Kierkegaard saw in work by Tieck and the romantic irony of his contemporaries. But the use of romantic irony in vaporwave can serve a greater, artistic purpose, aiming to deconstruct and change the perception of music. Finally, Vaporwave's use of pseudonyms is uniquely Kierkegaardian. Pseudonyms allow works to be judged without the bias of authority, and allow artists to create stories with multiple personalities. Vaporwave is more than just music, it is a destructive and constructive art, an audiovisual experience flowing with meaning.

LUCIDARCHIVE.COM

Four Aesthetic NYC Locales

by Andrews C.

Public Space
60 Wall Street

This publicly accessible atrium is a truly stunning place to cool off on and take a coffee break at the Starbucks located on the premises. Dimly lit, often vacant, and adorned with palm trees, this atrium features massive marble columns supporting a post-modern, gold trimmed ceiling. The walls are decorated with rock formations seated in small fountains, also marble, and a mesmerizing grid pattern tile.

Designed by Kevin Roche and completed in 1989, this space represents one of only two enclosed pedestrian spaces in all of lower Manhattan; there is nothing else quite like it. Connecting Wall and Pine Sts., Public Space is often packed in rush hour periods, as it is near a bustling subway stop. However, the late morning and early afternoon provide a more quiet time to chill out with some tunes.

The downside? There isn't really a whole lot to do here besides people watch. But, if you happen to already be in downtown Manhattan, this can be a wonderful spot to get some cool air on a hot day, or get a coffee and thaw out on a cold one. All while being surrounded by palm trees and the mall aesthetic of a bygone era.

Brookfield Place Mall
230 Vesey St, New York

Brookfield Place Mall is a luxury mall in lower Manhattan, with vendors like J Crew, Michael Kors, and Omega. In the center of the mall you'll find a 1986 César Pelli designed all-glass roof providing ample sunlight to a dozen beautiful palm trees. With three levels of shops, a spacious mezzanine, and plenty of marble and glass, one could spend all day soaking in the aesthetics. Seen here, the space also serves as a live music or entertainment space. Someone seriously needs to book 猫 シ Corp for a concert here!

Lots of places to eat, shop, and soak in some sun. Plenty of café's, snack-joints, and eateries nearby. The biggest boon? It's located right on the waterfront, which allows for some truly beautiful views right around sunset. If you are ready to drown in the luxurious excess of capitalism while listening to mallsoft, Brookfield Place is for you.
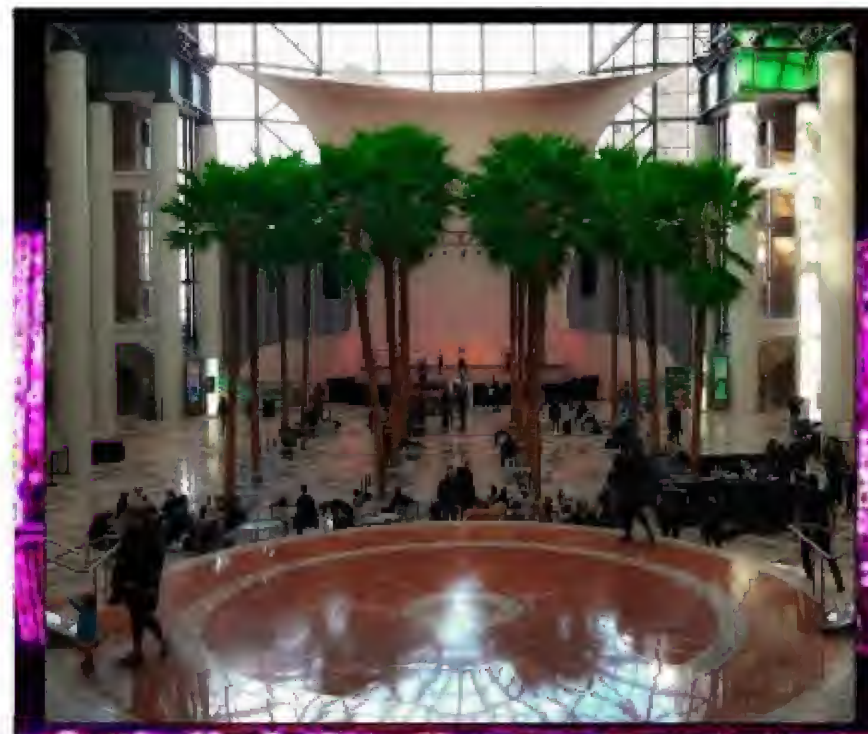
Four Aesthetic NYC Locales

Saint Mark's Place
8th Street

Described by Ada Calhoun as "the hippest street" in New York, St. Mark's represents a three block stretch between A and 3rd Aves. What was once home to Leon Trotsky, St. Mark's is a mishmash of cultural identities. In the 1970s and '80s it was known for its punk and counter-culture bohemian inhabitants. St. Mark's is now home to a large population of Japanese and Korean-Americans. Numerous izakaya, tea shops, and Karaoke bars dot the street, with dive bars, tattoo and head shops, and punk clothiers spaced between. Both of these two tones of the neighborhood clash in an amazing way. While not as vaporwave in terms of palms and pastels, the spirit of the neighborhood is.

If you're looking for a grittier tone and some cheap beer, check out St. Mark's. There is a great basement barcade, plenty of izakaya, and more kanji than /r/vaporwaveart. Centrally located between NoHo and East Village, St. Mark's is an amazing, culturally diverse, mini-neighborhood worth exploring.


Flushing Chinatown
(cont.)
Queens

Something that is absolutely wonderful about New York City is the fact that each neighborhood is quite different and diverse. While a long train ride from Manhattan, Chinatown in Flushing, Queens is one of the most rapidly growing Chinese enclaves in the United States. Getting off the subway on Main St. you'll be greeted by conversations in Mandarin, open air fish and vegetable markets, and tight alleyway markets with dimly lit dumpling and meat shops. A Burger King sits adjacent to a Dim Sum joint, and the bright red sign reading 'BANK OF AMERICA' is subtitled in Mandarin. The shops are marked with Chinese logography first and English second, and while many residents do speak English, many do not. If this is intimidating, have no fear! There are plenty of malls and shopping centers within a five block radius, selling everything from Korean beauty supplies to less-than-licensed phone cases. I'd recommend One World Mall, a snapshot of its top floor shown below, as it has an amazing food court.

A little bit Guangzhou and a little bit New York City, at night the vacuum formed plastic signs come to light, LEDs begin to flash, and the true fun of Chinatown begins. Numerous bars, KTV (Karaoke) parlors, and restaurants start to fill up as the population of Flushing is much younger and boisterous than at first glance. The scene set is something out of some early HKE albums, celebrating the nightlife of a mysterious city. While the discussion of the prevalence of Orientalism is best left to another day, the blend of American and Chinese culture reaches its peak in Flushing's Chinatown. If you want the feeling of being dropped in a late 90s Chinese action film and reminice on 新しい日の誕生 by 2184 without boarding an airplane to Hong Kong, check out Flushing's Chinatown.

SEASON 6 IS HERE
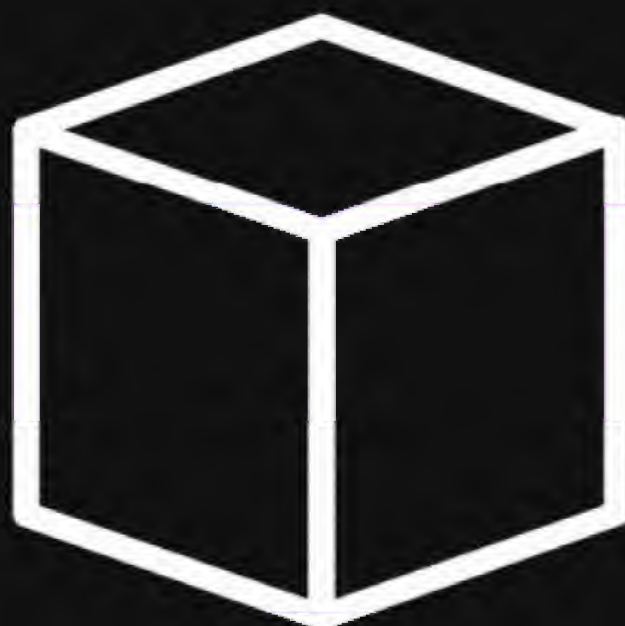
Mirror

@ *tonyskeor via instagram*

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MORI

Popular cassette label Lost Angles has introduced their first ever vinyl release, Mori, the 20th release by artist Dan Mason.

Mori was originally released in 2015 under the name Aokigahara Online. This was the Second release under this alias, with the first album being self titled. The name is a portmanteau of Aokigahara and America Online. The latter is a well known former Internet provider, frequently referenced and sampled in various forms of vaporwave media. The former, however, is the Japanese name of perhaps the most well known forest in Japan, colloquially referred to around the world as "the suicide forest." Knowing this will likely inform your listening experience of this album, as I will attest later.

Here are my first impressions of each track.

Mori

A simple, calm track. The core reminds one of the beginning of C418's Haggstrom, one of the soundtrack pieces for Minecraft. Given the wilderness choices, this seems like a deliberate place of inspiration.

Ki

This song builds off of the core ideas from "Mori," this time with soaring synths and percussion. Variations in chords begin to appear as well. Overall an excellent expansion of the theme set down in the first track.

Yama

Starting of with almost chiptune-esque synths, this track begins to drift away from the initial theme, rather than expand upon it. It also uses forest sounds with more animal noises, sounding almost like a jungle. Later on it begins to use very thumping drums, further reminding one of jungle themes.

Tori

This track initially abandons the nature sounds altogether in favor of bringing back the soaring synths from "Ki," returning with the light percussion. About halfway through the track the nature ambiance returns, this time wholly jungle sounding. Very moving, especially during the times the percussion disappears and then kicks back in. Rather than using a vide-like sound, "Tori" uses a piano melody.

Semi

Further emphasizing piano, Mason also layers on a second melody on the bells interspersed throughout the song. This is the first track to abandon the nature sounds entirely in favor of layering on most all of the instruments established in earlier tracks. Not as moving as many of the other tracks, but pleasant nonetheless.

Kaze

This track departs from established motifs the most of any track thus far. Put simply, it oozes despair. Rather than feeling or being directly nature inspired, this track is incredibly hopeless, the kind of hopelessness that vaporwave has become known for.

REVIEW

by scott

Mizu

Beginning with what one might imagine a Japanese take on a funeral drudge to sound like, the soaring synths quickly make a return. The track then adds in what sounds like early '70s synthesized water effects, then cuts out all other layers, then slowly replaces the synthesized water with rain, the next track's Japanese namesake.

Ame

This track sounds like the work of Vangelis, likely as a deliberate reference to his excellent work on the soundtrack for the seminal cyberpunk hellscape of Blade Runner. It is easy for one to imagine Roy Batty delivering his "tears in rain" monologue with this track in the background.

As briefly mentioned earlier, each track is named after a Japanese word for a forest sound. In order: Forest, trees, mountain, birds, cicadas, wind, water, and of course, rain. Knowing this, it becomes clear that each track is meant to either utilize or invoke these sounds. The album does so quite wonderfully.

As beautiful as it is, knowing that Aokigahara is the "suicide forest" definitely affects the listening experience. Knowing that, there appears to be layers of despair hanging over each track, and makes the listener uncomfortable with the melodies, especially "Kaze," which is blanketed in sadness and dread.

Mori is an incredibly moving album, even if at some points held back by its simplistic mixing.

森

Album art for *Mori,* the album created by Dan Mason.

Interview with
christtt

How and when did you first hear about vaporwave?

"The first time I was ever sort of exposed to it uh was probably uh late 2012 i was working with an artist and he sent me a youtube track (worked to export never's sleep dealer) and that really sort of set me off because you know I hadn't heard this sort of, I've heard things like the field but I hadn't heard something that was minimal that was sort of, there was something I hadn't heard there before. I'm not sure exactly what it was but it definitely spoke to me at the time and still does."

Why did you choose to make vaporwave in the first place?

"Well I had, up to that point, been making music, well making music's not the right term. Throwing things together for the past couple of years before that. I just sort of, it just sounded a lot like the sort of music I was already making so I was thinking: "Hm, this looks interesting, this looks fun, this looks like a change of pace. This looks like something I could easily as do as sort of like a side project, maybe gain some more followers to my main project, which at the time was "Bi-product," and I was thinking that would be the way to branch out, try new things and also be able to experiment a little bit with music and not have to put another crappy release

out under my main alias. I think I had finished my first track on the day the new Pope was rung in and there's a lot of s*** on TV about, yknow, "Oh we got a new Pope" and yknow that sort s***. That's part of the reason why I went with the 'christtt' thing as well as, yknow, not necessarily, I don't necessarily believe in the whole thing, but it's all very interesting but it's all very interesting and it's all very alluring.

The sound and the quality of the art is something that always spoke to me in a way. Not necessarily the messages per se, but the sort of concepts and the sort of visual aesthetic of it really spoke to me and being reminded of that while I was making new music and I was trying to think of a new alias, I was trying to think of something religious because I hadn't seen something like that. I'd seen all these roman busts and vhs things and very much (inaudible) vaporwave sort of trophs going off at the time and I was thinking, " I don't really see anyone going the religious route." I was thinking, "Oh hmm, well someone already took Saint Pepsi, well what about Pope Coke? No, that sounds too much of a rip-off. How about christ?" And I'm thinking, "If you type christ into google, you're gonna see a lot of the other Christ. Oh I know, I'm gonna be cool and

hip and use those daggers, those cross-es, in my name. I'm not just gonna use one because people are going to think it's "chris cross"," and I'm thinking, "Hm, I'll use 3 t's, not only is this, you're gonna easily see me on google, but also, you're gonna have that extra level of 'I know my Bible s***.'" But, with that said, I thought it just sounded really cool at the time. I still do really like the name, I'm still very happy I went along with that instead of something else. I can't re-member what the other idea was , something about dilbert, something I was thinking about at the time. But I'm glad I went with christtt and not "Dilbert Wave" or "Cat Bert" or something. I don't think I would have gotten that far with Dilbert Wave.

What was the question again?

Oh.
I already made music so I thought this would be another avenue.

What were some of the biggest difficulties you faced along the way of your music career?

Besides trying to find a following, which was kinda hard at first but wasn't as hard since I had already started a label when start-ing to make more music so I had a place to put it as well as other people's music. That sorta helped me grow along with it, but me as an artist, I think the hardest part was to find the audience to play music out to and finding the specific sound that I was trying to go for.

@matt_mathers420
How did vaporwave change your view on music if it had any effect on it?

In a way, it sorta made me think that you didn't have to do nearly as much as… you… you can get away with a lot and not necessari-ly get in trouble for it, now granted that could change. But at least in the past, you can do a lot and get away with a lot. That's probably the one big thing I took away from it.

@superbrodman18

Can you send me nudes?

No.

What's the least favorite album of yours?
Probably Wave, which is an EP I did. It's got
maybe one track that's worth it, but the other
tracks are kind of garbage.

@DanMasonVapor

Do you pronounce all the T's?

It's just Christ. Christ! I thought it was
f***ing obvious. Christianity is such a huge re-
ligion that you'd think, "Oh, it's a cross," so
you know what, mm let me think, what's Je-
sus's name? Jesus C H R I S T? And anybody
who even thinks it a "christatatatata" with em-
phasis on the t's, I'm thinking like, you may
not be religious or anything, but in all the im-
agery of Jesus Christ on the cross, there's 3
crosses because there's two people being
hung next to him. I thought it was f***ing obvi-
ous. I grew up in a very religious home but I
still thought it was obvious that that's what it
was. People calling me "chris," and I get that
because it looks like "chris cross cross
cross," well that's why I didn't go with
"christ" was because people would think it's
"chris cross" instead of christtt, and plus it
looks cool with three t's.

Maybe it's just me, but that's just so, why
the f*** would I name myself christatatata? Do
I have a stutter? I mean a little bit, but...

mattt

Honestly, I was confused about your name
myself.

Dude, you're really bummin me out. Again,
I thought it was obvious. I guess religion is
not as big as it once was.

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